DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 154 553 EC 110 256

AUTHOR Wyne, Marvin D.
TITLE Intervening with Developmentally Disabled Children in a Regular School Setting.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 6p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, March, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Custodial Mentally Handicapped; Elementary Education; *Mainstreaming; Mentally Handicapped; *Program Descriptions; *Trainable Mentally Handicapped

ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the integration of 36 moderately and severely retarded children (3 to 16 years old) from a private self-contained special school to a public elementary school. Addressed are the participants and procedures, settings, preparation for integration, and the integration experience. Noted among the implications of the integration experience are the need to prepare parents as well as children for the transition; the value of pre-integration planning and preparation with administrators, teachers, and children in the less restrictive setting; and the importance of ongoing systematic evaluation research. (SBH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED154553

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Intervening with Developmentally Disabled Children in a Regular School Setting

Marvin D. Wyne
School of Education
The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Paper presented at the 1978 Annual Meeting of the
American Education Research Association

Session 8.05

Toronto, Canada

March 28, 1978

Printed in U.S.A.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marvin D. Wyne

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

EC110 251

Intervening with Developmentally Disabled Children in a Regular School Setting

Marvin D. Wyne

Introduction

The purpose of the present paper is to share the lessons learned when 36 moderately and severely retarded children moved from a private self-contained special school to a public elementary school. The integration of handicapped children into less restrictive settings is a fundamental consideration in light of the passage of P.L. 94-142 (the National Education for All Handicapped Children Act). It is right and proper that efforts have been concentrated on creating a legal and educational opportunity for all handicapped children. However, in the heady atmosphere which follows successful revolutions (and the passage of P.L. 94-142 is a revolutionary event), there is sometimes an unreasoned rush to institute newly won rights and privileges. This is the story of what happened in one community when a group of parents, handicapped children, and special teachers were given the choice of integrating their program into the local school system or continuing to operate privately and independently.

Participants and Procedures

Although the focus of this paper is upon the integration experience, a brief description of earlier reported research findings from the intervention (Wyne and Stuck, 1977) will acquaint you with the participants and procedures of the program. The 36 developmentally disabled pupils ranged in chronological age from 3 years, 8 months to 16 years, 2 months. Intelligence test scores ranged from approximately 25 to about 60. The research study reported findings from the developmental intervention over an 11-month period. The intervention emphasized six adaptive behavior-educational skill areas: (1) gross motor, (2) fine motor, (3) social skills, (4) self-help, (5) cognitive, and (6) language. Space in three of the four classrooms was physically organized around six "learning stations," one for each of the six curriculum areas. The adult-pupil ration was 1:5, including aides.

Using each pupil's pre-intervention rate of developmental progress as the baseline, the amount of developmental growth over the 11-month intervention period was found to be statistically significant (at or above the .05 level) in each of the skill areas.

Settings

The intervention setting was a regular elementary school serving children in grades K-6 and was located in a city of about 12,000 population. Minimal physical adaptations were made in three ground floor classrooms, one mobile classroom, two rest rooms, and a small gymtorium. Except for the four classrooms and some specially adapted playground and gym equipment, handicapped and nonhandicapped children shared these facilities. Handicapped pupils ate in the school cafeteria with their nonhandicapped peers.

Prior to moving to the elementary school, the program for moderately and severely handicapped children had been located in a renovated wing of an older school building no longer used for instruction. Known as the Community Developmental School, the program had been organized and supported privately, for the most part. Public funds were used to support only a few of the younger TMR pupils who were not old enough to attend the one TMR class in the local schools. The opportunity to integrate the program physically and financially into the school system was provided by an ESEA Title IV-C grant from the Department of Public Instruction.

Preparation for Integration

The Board of Directors of the Community Developmental School met with the parents to discuss the invitation to integrate the program into the local school system. In light of the years of financial struggle to keep the program in operation and in view of the complaints about the lack of opportunity for and acceptance of handicapped children, one might have expected a rousing cheer of victory from the parent body of the Developmental School. On the contrary, their immediate response was to reject the invitation to integrate. Many parents expressed fear of the possible negative effects on their children of the reactions of nonhandicapped children. Some parents were reluctant to relinquish direct control over policies, program, personnel, and budget. Other parents viewed integration as "giving up" or "losing" the program they had worked so hard and sacrificed so much to develop. Instead of voting to reject integration that evening, however, they agreed to postpone the decision until they could visit the "new" school and meet the principal and the instructional staff.

The teachers at the Developmental School favored integration and they served as a moderating influence on the parent body. In fact, it was one of the teachers who made the suggestion to postpone a vote on the question until everyone concerned could visit the new school and learn more about the implications of integration for the handicapped children, and the parents, the teaching staff. Within two weeks a series of orientation sessions was planned and carried out in the new school. First the Developmental School teaching staff met the principal and teachers and visited the classrooms and facilities that were being recommended for use. The instructional staffs had the opportunity to discuss ideas as well as potential problem areas related to the move. Next, the parent group participated in an "open house" and orientation session. They were accompanied by the Developmental School teaching staff who showed them how the facilities could be adapted for use. The parents were warmly received by the superintendent, principal, and teachers. Finally, the Developmental School teachers and aides brought their pupils to the new school for a tour of the facilities.

The Integration Experience

The warm reception and the size and quality of the facilities at the elementary school changed the attitudes of many parents. A joint planning group composed of Developmental School parents and teachers and the principal, teachers, and parents from the elementary school was organized to draft the details of the integration plan. The plan had to be accepted by the board of education and by the parents of the Developmental School. A department of public instruction (ESEA Title IV) grant and the local school budget provided funds for removal of architectural barriers, and renovation/adaptation of the facilities. These monies also provided for equipment, materials, and contracted services for therapy, testing, and evaluation research support.

The program was encouraged to retain its original name, the Developmental School. The intervention program was able to generate research evidence which supported its effectiveness and, after two successful years, it has become a state validated program. Under the auspices of the state department of public instruction, public school special education teachers and aides and staff members from residential institutions now come in groups of five or six to the Developmental School for an intensive one-week training institute to learn first-hand about the organization, staffing, curriculum, and intervention strategies employed.

Implications of the Integration Experience

The experience of integrating moderately and severely handicapped pupils into a less restrictive environment suggests:

1. The need to prepare parents as well as children for the transition. In many cases, parents whose children are being affected by the implementation of P.L. 94-142 do not belong to groups or organizations for the handicapped. These parents need to understand what is planned for their child and how to support at home the skills and behaviors taught in the school setting. The individualized education program (IEP) or individualized habilitation program (IHP) provides an excellent common ground on which the intervention program and the parents can meet. If the setting in which services to the child are being delivered is changing, make sure parents are informed and oriented well in advance. Commonly, parent discussion groups are formed. These periodic sessions permit feelings as well as information to be shared. This parent forum is an appropriate way to get counselors and administrators involved in home-school communications. Support personnel such as speech clinicians, physical therapists, and the like can use these settings to keep parents informed and to seek their counsel and support.

2. The value of pre-integration planning and preparation with administrators, teachers, and children in the less restrictive setting.

The wisdom of including the regular teaching staff in the planning and orientation was borne out in this experience. Active involvement of regular teaching and support personnel appeared to be a key factor in securing their cooperation and support. These positive attitudes were, hopefully, communicated directly and indirectly to the pupils in the school.

3. The importance of making adaptations in the physical space, at a minimum, "no frills" adaptations in doorways, steps, toilets, lavatories, and drinking fountains.

Making these physical changes in the public school setting was important for the obvious reasons, but, in addition, reflected a visible commitment and acceptance to the parents of the handicapped pupils.

4. The need to establish a public relations program to inform and to prevent unwarranted suspicions and fears.

The early formation of a parent-teacher committee helped lay the groundwork for the successful integration of the program into the academic and social context of the school. The program was explained to various school, parent, and civic groups by way of a brief slide-tape presentation. These

presentations were also used to solicit much-needed volunteers to assist in the implementation of the program.

5. The importance of on-going systematic evaluation research. The successful social and political integration of developmentally disabled children into less restrictive settings has been the focus of this paper. Of equal importance is the need to systematically evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Normalization and mainstreaming are not ends in themselves. They are enabling processes that are intended to bring to bear the most appropriate intervention services and resources. Educational psychology has far to go in assisting with the development of appropriate evaluation designs, assessment techniques, and teacher training models for developmentally disabled children. I am not sure that intervention should be considered ethical unless it contains a valid evaluation component.

6. Finally, this integration experience underscored for me the disadvantages of limiting research strategies to conventional designs. The value of context research in such settings is potentially great. Though the efficacy of the intervention is the central thrust, the context within which the intervention takes place is rich with constructs and variables that call for ecological, ethnographic, and systems research methods.

I would not have you believe that everything fell perfectly into place with no problems. Of course there were problems and even four years later, blips and gliches arise. The point is that moderately and severely handicapped children can be successfully integrated into less restrictive settings. What is required is careful planning, involvement of all segments of the parent/professional population, attention to public relations and human relations, and the establishment of trust.